United Nations S/2006/870

Security Council

Distr.: General
8 November 2006

Original: English

Monthly report of the Secretary-General on Darfur

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraphs 6, 13 and 16 of Security Council resolution 1556 (2004), paragraph 15 of Council resolution 1564 (2004), paragraph 17 of Council resolution 1574 (2004) and paragraph 12 of Council resolution 1590 (2005). It covers the month of September 2006.

II. Insecurity in Darfur

2. September witnessed an increase in violence in Darfur. Fighting between the signatories and non-signatories of the Darfur Peace Agreement intensified with the Government of the Sudan using aerial bombardment in attacks against villages controlled by the National Redemption Front (NRF) and G19 rebel groups. Tensions between Darfur Peace Agreement signatories also increased, for the first time. Militia attacks have also significantly increased, in particular in Southern Darfur, targeting civilian populations and internally displaced persons while tensions increased among rebel groups. During the reporting period, African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) peacekeepers were also targeted more often, especially in Northern Darfur, while attacks on humanitarian workers continued unabated.

3. The ceasefire between the Minni Minawi faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Government of the Sudan held generally throughout Darfur in September. However, several incidents indicated that tensions exist between these two signatories of the Darfur Peace Agreement. On 22 September 2006, SLM-Minawi forces accompanying the rebel leader beat up two Military Intelligence officers of the Government of the Sudan at the Nyala airport. This was the fourth in a series of such incidents in Nyala. On 28 September, a clash erupted between SLM-Minawi bodyguards and police officers of the Government of the Sudan in Omdurman, Khartoum, sparked by the detention of an SLM-Minawi soldier. In retaliation for the arrest of their comrade, SLM-Minawi members raided a nearby police station and took several police officers hostage. Reports suggest that at least one person was killed in the ensuing shoot-out.

4. For the first time since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement, one signatory accused the other of breaching the ceasefire agreement. On 30 August, an SLM-Minawi spokesperson accused the Government and the Janjaweed militia of

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random killing in Southern Darfur from 28 to 30 August, including the torching of around 13 villages south of Nyala.

5. Meanwhile, fighting between Darfur Peace Agreement signatories and non-signatories continued. On 28 August, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) launched an aerial and ground offensive against SRF forces in the Kutrud and Abu Sakin area, 60 kilometres north of El Fasher, and captured Um Sidr on 31 August. On 11 September, SRF forces recaptured Um Sidr, forcing an SAF retreat towards Melit, 60 kilometres northeast of El Fasher.

6. Heavy fighting was also reported in Southern Darfur between 10 and 13 September when SAF forces, in dozens of vehicles, assisted by Janjaweed, artillery and aerial support, launched an offensive against Darfur Peace Agreement non-signatory groups in Eastern Jebel Marra, attacking over a dozen villages. SRF forces moving southwards into the Jebel Marra reportedly supported the non-signatory groups in Eastern Jebel Marra.

7. In Southern Darfur, on 24 August, an armed group attacked the SAF garrison at Sunqu, 240 kilometres south of Nyala. Reports suggest that a former SLM-Minawi commander conducted the attack, which killed 10 and wounded 15, in retaliation for earlier attacks on villages near Buram.

8. The grave humanitarian situation in Northern Darfur, similar to patterns of violence observed at the height of the conflict in 2004, has been particularly disturbing. On 28 and 29 August, reports were received that Government of the Sudan forces entered and looted Kutum town, Tawilla and Um Sidr. Northern Darfur. On 10 September, Government aircraft bombed several villages 20 kilometres southwest of Tawila. The SRF forces recaptured Um Sidr. SAF aircraft continued aerial bombardment of Sai village and Hashaba North on 12 September. On 16 September, during ongoing fighting between SAF and SRF, Antonov planes reportedly bombed the SRF-controlled villages of Anka and Awaad, some 30 kilometres southwest of Um Sidr.

9. Meanwhile, new increasing tensions between and within rebel groups supporting the Darfur Peace Agreement in Northern Darfur. On 3 September, a group of Minawi SLM-Minawi soldiers attacked their highway commander in Garoda. Three persons were reportedly killed and three injured. Senior SLM-Minawi commanders as well as the Kutum Commissioner were in the area. Tensions heightened again on 28 September, when an unidentified armed group attacked the SLM-Minawi headquarters near Tawilla, Northern Darfur, during the visit of senior leaders of the rebel group, killing 11 and injuring 20. A September ceasefire was between SLM-Minawi (mainly Zaghawa) and SLM-Free Will (mainly Birgid) in Muhajeriya, Southern Darfur, after SLM-Free Will members were attacked and detained. On 5 and 7 October, armed clashes between forces were reported once between SLM-Free Will and SLM-Minawi.

10. Armed banditry and looting targeting humanitarians and commercial traffic also continued to be a major source of insecurity and an indication of the lawlessness prevailing in Darfur. On a humanitarian armed convoy consisting of truck carrying fuel, on 15 September. Another ambushed a United Nations agency truck carrying 17 metric tons of commodities near Abdel Shakur. The drivers and trucks were released on 18 September. On 20 September, three armed men looted two commercial trucks near Um Kadadah, about 18 kilometres from Nyala.

11. SAF soldiers have also been accused of robbery and looting. On 30 August, SAF soldiers robbed villagers in Kornoi, Northern Darfur, of their belongings and money. When one woman refused to hand over her blanket, the soldiers assaulted her. On 1 September, SAF soldiers looted the health centre, pharmacy and the guesthouse of an international non-governmental organization (NGO) in Hashaba North, Northern Darfur, after its staff had been killed in crossfire. On 9 September, SAF soldiers reportedly destroyed relief food in international NGO distribution centres in Sanihaye village, east of Um Sidir.

12. Peacekeepers of the African Union (AU), in particular in North Darfur, were targeted frequently during September. On 3 September, 12 armed men disarmed an AU team on a firewood patrol near the camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kassab, Northern Darfur, stealing their vehicles and other equipment. On 4 September, armed men in five pick-up vehicles ambushed an AMIS patrol on its way from Tina to Kutum, Northern Darfur. On the same day, five armed men opened fire on AU personnel guarding the AU civilian police station in the Kassab IDP Camp. On 11 September, in Western Darfur, five unknown gunmen fired nine shots at AU soldiers on duty at the AMIS borehole, north of the AMIS group site at Masteri village, Western Darfur.

13. Violence against humanitarian personnel continued throughout September. On 1 September, a national staff member of the International Rescue Committee died in Hashaba, Northern Darfur, in crossfire between the NRF and Government forces. This was the twelfth aid worker killed in Darfur since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement. On 5 September, students in Nyala attacked United Nations offices and compounds of international non-governmental organizations during an anti-United Nations demonstration organized by the Trade Union Workers, injuring one security guard.

14. Hijacking and armed robbery of humanitarian vehicles has also become commonplace in Darfur. On 7 September, three armed men stopped two international non-governmental organization vehicles south of Zalingei, beating the NGO staff and stealing cash.

15. On 28 August, about 100 armed militia from several different tribes, including the Habaniya and Falata, attacked and looted several villages south of Buram, including Al Amoud Al Akdar and Hadak, destroying shops, a graining mill and a water tank, and burning houses. The same day, militia also attacked the village of Gueghin. On 30 August, the SLM-Minawi accused the Government of the Sudan of being involved in the attack. On 9 September, militia returned to Al Amoud Al Akdar and attacked the population, which had gathered to meet a joint AU/United Nations team coming to assess an earlier attack, which took place on 28 August.

16. Despite the agreement of 26 July and the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Sudan and Chad on 8 August, fighting between Chadian armed opposition groups and the Chadian regular forces (FANT) continued in September. On 16 September, Chadian armed opposition group rebels and FANT clashed in Jebel Merfain, 70 kilometres north-west of El Geneina, on the Chadian side of the border. The groups were reinforced from Western Darfur on 19 September and engaged in heavy clashes with FANT forces on the same day in Jebel Merfein. The Chadian armed opposition groups reportedly captured 60 Chadian soldiers and numerous tanks and vehicles in the attack.

III. Human rights and protection

17. The Government of the Sudan military campaign in Northern and Southern Darfur is taking its toll on the civilian population. The large-scale attacks by militia groups on villages south of Buram, Southern Darfur, between 28 August and 9 September, which were referred to above, resulted in dozens of people killed and injured, and thousands displaced. Many of the newly displaced find little safety in IDP camps owing to the presence of militias and armed groups around and within the camps. Sexual and gender-based violence in Darfur targeting IDP women also continued. Government authorities have curtailed Sudanese citizens' right to protest and have restricted the movement of United Nations staff in violation of the status-of-forces agreement.

18. The sustained military campaign in Northern and Southern Darfur against non-signatories has resulted in indiscriminate killings and other grave abuses against civilians, including death, injury, rape and displacement. When a plane dropped bombs around the market and the school in Hillet Hajar, Northern Darfur, on 2 September, many of the villagers fled to the mountains to hide. Since May, the attacks have forced thousands to flee their villages to seek refuge in already overstretched IDP camps or isolated rural areas. Some 50,000 people have been displaced in the last four months, with villages in the countryside effectively emptied following aerial bombardments. Since mid-August, at least 12 people have died because of lack of medical services in camps in Tawila, Northern Darfur.

19. The militia attacks on villages near Buram described above led to the death and displacement of civilians, including the separation of children from their families. Militia surrounded, looted and set fire to villages, killing scores of civilians. In the area of Seiseban alone, witnesses reported that militia killed 75 civilians, including women and children as they were trying to escape the attack. Some 2,500 people fled their villages, and around 5,000 who were unable to escape are trapped in the area and hiding in the mountains.

20. The threat of armed militia around and within IDP camps severely restricted freedom of movement of internally displaced persons and hindered their ability to enjoy an adequate standard of living. On 31 August, militiamen killed a shepherd grazing his cattle two kilometres south of Gereida, Southern Darfur, and attacked IDP women fetching firewood in the same area. On 11 September, two uniformed men shot a male IDP in El Geneina and stole personal belongings, while on 20 September, a male IDP was beaten and robbed by five men, two of whom were in uniform outside El Geneina.

21. The presence of armed groups within IDP camps such as ZamZam and Abou Shouk in Northern Darfur makes the camps increasingly militarized and insecure. There are widespread and persistent reports of violence against civilians in camps, including murder, physical attack, rape and armed robbery. On 12 September, 10 armed men entered the Tawila IDP Camp, Northern Darfur, and stole the animals of IDPs at gunpoint. AU peacekeepers followed the gunmen and returned their fire, killing one and wounding another.

22. Attacks on female IDPs by armed militia outside the camps were recurrent. On 3 September, in camps in El Geneina, Western Darfur, four Massalit IDP women were physically assaulted and fired at by armed men in uniform. On the same day, in Gereida, Southern Darfur, four Massalit IDP women were surrounded by 60 armed

men in uniform, who beat the women and raped two of them. The increase in insecurity and military conflict has exacerbated the already persistent practice of targeting women and girls with sexual violence. While the State Committees on Gender-Based Violence in Darfur could provide a potential forum to address these violations, the unwillingness of the authorities to recognize the pervasiveness of this problem and their continued efforts to cast doubt on reported incidents have only further burdened the victims of sexual violence and prevented an adequate Government response.

23. Government responses to demonstrations in early September illustrated intolerance for the public expression of dissenting views. On 3 September, Government forces broke up a peaceful gathering at El Fasher University using firearms, tear gas and electric batons; at least one student died and 19 were injured. On 8 September, in El Geneina, a religious leader was detained overnight by Sudanese Military Intelligence for allegedly urging people to demonstrate in favour of the United Nations in Darfur during his Friday sermon. The Government's use of excessive force and other repressive mechanisms to respond to internal dissent contravenes the provisions of the Interim National Constitution guaranteeing freedom of peaceful assembly and expression and respect for human rights.

24. In violation of their obligations under the status-of-forces agreement, Government authorities repeatedly stopped United Nations staff at checkpoints and, in some cases, obstructed them from performing their mandated duties. On 18 September, a national security officer stopped a United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) team in Nyala. The staff were taken to the local national security office and released only after United Nations security officers intervened.

IV. The humanitarian situation

25. The insecurity, banditry and fighting which have characterized the reporting period continued to prevent access to populations in need of humanitarian assistance. The targeting and killing of humanitarian workers, the hijacking of humanitarian vehicles as well as the insecurity caused by clashes between armed groups forced humanitarians to suspend operations. In Northern Darfur alone, the World Food Programme (WFP) reported that 355,000 people went without food aid during July and August. Humanitarian action is proving to be more challenging as fighting continues, the number of factions increases, lines of command fragment and frontlines multiply.

26. Humanitarian access, already at its lowest in August since 2004, is still severely limited, with road travel outside urban centres becoming more difficult. Operations depend increasingly on expensive air transport. South of Nyala, Southern Darfur, humanitarian organizations have no access to the newly displaced because of ongoing insecurity. On 16 September, an international NGO evacuated seven international and 16 national staff members from Muhajirya back to Nyala owing to the unpredictable security situation. Large parts of Jebel Marra, an estimated population of more than 100,000, are inaccessible because of militia attacks. The impact on civilians can only be estimated since no humanitarian assessments can be undertaken in recently attacked areas. Humanitarian organizations suspended activities around Tawila, as the risk of hijacking and harassment became unacceptably high. In less than a month, five vehicles belonging

to humanitarian organizations have been taken at gunpoint in the area. One humanitarian aid worker was killed in Hashaba North, Northern Darfur. As a result, more than 80,000 persons have been deprived of basic health services and access to water. Up to 1,000 IDPs have sought refuge at the IDP camp close to AMIS in Tawila. Food distribution continued, but the camp is lacking in other basic services. Other IDPs sought refuge in areas which were unreachable for humanitarian operators.

27. Notwithstanding these difficulties, humanitarian actors continue to provide assistance to some 2.6 million conflict-affected people. Health, nutrition, food aid, and water and sanitation programmes continue. Agencies and Government of the Sudan counterparts worked together to control a cholera outbreak with 1,025 cases in Southern Darfur alone. In September, WFP and partners distributed food to some 130,000 people in Mellit, Malha, Sayah and Kutum in Northern Darfur. As food distribution was carried out, one vehicle was stolen in Kutum. Those areas had not been reached since May and are prone to food insecurity.

28. The moratorium on bureaucratic procedures for aid agencies to operate in Darfur remains in place and facilitates the work of over 14,000 humanitarian personnel. However, the moratorium is applied inconsistently. Unreasonable delays in obtaining visas, customs clearance for relief items and recruitment of Sudanese staff persist. This results in a waste of time and resources that could be better spent on vulnerable populations.

29. The new agreement between the Government and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) allowing it to serve as Camp Coordinator of Kalma Camp in Southern Darfur, signed in May, has been suspended. This is the sixth time that NRC activities in Kalma have been suspended. The Government has also blocked access for NRC staff to Kalma as well as other parts of Southern Darfur where they have operations.

V. Implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement

30. No new parties joined the Darfur Peace Agreement in September while efforts to reconcile the SLM factions continued. The already weak pro-Darfur Peace Agreement bloc is further threatened by frictions between and within rebel groups. While some progress has been achieved on the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation, Darfur Peace Agreement implementation is significantly lagging behind; almost all deadlines set out in the Agreement have been missed so far.

31. In September, both the signatories and civil society organizations stepped up efforts to bolster the peace process. The Zaghawa Native Administration, in coordination with Minni Minawi, spearheaded an initiative aimed at reconciling the SLM-Minawi and some G19 commanders in Northern Darfur. Representatives of the Native Administration met G19 commanders in Gira, Northern Darfur, on 15 September. Talks reportedly also commenced between SLM commanders in Eastern Jebel Marra and the Southern Darfur State authorities.

32. At the same time, in September the fragility of the rebel groups and alliances was demonstrated, which further complicates efforts to consolidate political support for the Darfur Peace Agreement. On 23 and 24 September, local media reported frictions within the leadership of the SLM-Free Will. While Secretary General Essa

East of SLM-Free will issued a statement on 22 September relieving the Chairman of SLM-Free Will, Abdul Rahman Moussa, of his duties, a number of elements within the faction issued statements on 23 September rejecting the move. Moreover, recent conflicts within the SLM-Minawi faction in Gereida and between SLM-Minawi and SLM-Free Will in Muhajirya appear to divide the pro-Darfur Peace Agreement parties along ethnic lines.

33. During September, the Ceasefire Commission remained largely inactive. It was unable to address the ongoing military confrontations, nor did it move forward with the implementation of Darfur Peace Agreement security provisions such as the disarmament of the Janjaweed. Following the exclusion of the non-signatories from the sub-Ceasefire Commission level in August, the Commission also decided to exclude observers, including the United Nations, at the sub-Ceasefire Commission level. In September, the Commission held five of its biweekly meetings while three were cancelled. It discussed 8 of the remaining 77 violation reports forwarded by the sub-Ceasefire Commissions and referred 2 to the Joint Commission. The Joint Commission, scheduled to meet monthly, has not met since the beginning of August.

34. On 26 August, following amendments in the Northern and Southern Darfur State Constitutions, the State Legislative Council in Western Darfur amended the State Constitution to allow for representation of pro-Darfur Peace Agreement groups in the executive and legislative branches of the State. The pro-Darfur Peace Agreement groups will gain the position of the Deputy Governor, two ministers, two commissioners, two executive directors, the Deputy Chairman of the State Legislative Council and 21 members in the State Legislative Council. The Government also increased National Congress Party (NCP) membership in the State Legislative Council by four. NCP will still retain the absolute majority of seats. The Wali of Western Darfur has approved the amendments and they are awaiting endorsement from the Ministry of Justice in Khartoum.

35. Meanwhile, the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission continued its assessments through mid-September, but it has only been able to access parts of Darfur. The teams have now reconvened in Khartoum to prepare preliminary draft cluster reports based on existing work. Early findings confirm the enormous impact that the conflict has had on the lives and livelihoods of the people of Darfur. Despite the efforts of the humanitarian community, both international and national, basic services are badly overburdened or non-existent.

36. In September, the AU Darfur Peace Agreement Implementation Team in Khartoum commenced work on the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation and circulated to key partners for comments a strategy paper on it, which outlines the main priorities of the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation. The African Union has named Abdul Mohamed (Ethiopia) as the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation and requested other members of the Preparatory Committee to finalize their Committee nominations. The Government of the Sudan, the League of Arab States and the United Nations have nominated their representatives. Consultations are currently under way on the appointment of the Chairperson of the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation.

VI. United Nations support to the African Union Mission in the Sudan

37. On 20 September, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) extended the mandate of the African Union Mission in the Sudan for three months and approved a new concept of operations to fulfil its Darfur Peace Agreement responsibilities. The AU PSC also called on the United Nations and other partners to support AMIS. Pursuant to this and previous PSC decisions of 10 March and 15 May 2006, the United Nations and the African Union have agreed on a package of immediate United Nations support to AMIS with a view to strengthening its efforts to implement the Darfur Peace Agreement. The support package includes logistical and material support, military staff support, advisory support to civilian police, as well as civilian support in the areas of mine action, public information and support to Darfur Peace Agreement implementation. The objective of this support is to immediately enhance the management of AMIS through a proactive advisory role by United Nations staff. These staff will be fully dedicated to supporting AMIS and co-located with AMIS throughout Darfur. In this respect it will be critical for AMIS to provide protection to those deployed as part of the support package.

38. Chairperson Konaré of the AU Commission and I wrote to President al-Bashir on 22 September outlining the main features of the support package and requesting the President's personal support for its implementation. On 3 October, President al-Bashir responded giving his personal support for the assistance package. I subsequently replied to that letter stressing that the United Nations and the African Union would proceed in full transparency with this initiative. I also stressed that any staff deployed as part of United Nations support to AMIS would be covered by the current status-of-forces agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations concerning UNMIS.

VII. Observations

39. Five months after the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement, violence has increased again in Darfur. I am gravely concerned about the Government's apparent attempt to find a military solution to the crisis, which runs counter to previous Security Council resolutions and the Sudan's commitments to the Darfur Peace Agreement. Thousands of Sudanese Armed Forces troops have been deployed to the area in clear violation of the Darfur Peace Agreement and Security Council resolution 1591 (2005).

40. I particularly deplore the use of aerial bombardment by Government forces, which fails to distinguish civilians from combatants and is in breach of resolution 1591 (2005) and international humanitarian law.

41. I note that Darfur Peace Agreement signatories continue to violate their obligations under the Agreement and non-signatories under the N'Djamena Ceasefire Agreement. I call on all parties to halt the violence, uphold their obligations under the various agreements and work towards a political solution for the conflict in Darfur.

42. I condemn in the strongest terms the attack by militia on defenceless civilians south of Buram, Southern Darfur, which underscores the prevailing lack of security.

I urge the Government to move forward with its commitment to disarm the Janjaweed militia, who continue to pose a serious threat to the lives and livelihoods of IDPs and the civilian population at large.

43. AMIS continues to carry out its important work in this very difficult environment, while still facing serious resource shortages. The United Nations will continue to implement, as rapidly as possible, the agreed package of support for AMIS. While this support should give a boost to the AU Mission, it is not a replacement for an increase in the size and an augmentation of the capabilities of the current force in Darfur, which would be required to effectively implement the security provisions of the Darfur Peace Agreement and to put the AU Mission in a position to make a broad contribution to an improvement in the security situation in the region.

44. Even as efforts to strengthen AMIS continue, it is important to reiterate that a comprehensive and lasting resolution to the crisis will come only through a broad-based political settlement, which will require the complete commitment of the Government and the rebel movements. This settlement will be achievable only if discussion and dialogue replace the bombings, attacks and counter-attacks of the last two months.

45. The suffering of the Darfurian population has lasted far too long. The gains made in 2005 in controlling malnutrition and mortality, and in the provision of services, are coming under strain with humanitarian needs expected to increase. Humanitarian aid workers continue to attempt to reopen routes, negotiate safe passage for aid convoys, fill in emerging gaps, and advocate for the respect of humanitarian principles, but their valiant efforts are undermined by violence targeted at them. Twelve aid workers have lost their lives since the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed — more than in the previous two years. An overall trend is developing where humanitarian aid is being targeted for violence.

46. I condemn these killings and strongly appeal to all parties to stop the violence, to respect humanitarian principles, and to allow humanitarian actors to provide much-needed assistance and monitor protection concerns without being subject to harassment, looting and killing.